

ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS IN CO-EDUCATION SYSTEM OF PAKISTAN: A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

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Co-education is not taken as best system of education as per culture of Pakistan and it also has been a hurdle in learning especially for women as they are not comfortable in combine education settings despite that fact female enrollment at higher education levels is increasing. As women face countless problems when they remain in coeducation. Moreover, discrimination is one of the most highlighted hurdle in this regard. It is because of same hurdle that their development process is not properly finished and they also lack potential for being productive part of society after getting education from institutes running co-education system. Most of Pakistani people are, generally, not in favor of co-education system in the country and support the single/ separate education system. Its socio- cultural settings are also in favor of keeping male and female members in separate classes during academic sessions. There are mixed thoughts about the importance of co-education but people have no choice other than to send their children to such system.

Keywords: Gender, problems, Co-education, perception, Gender.

INTRODUCTION

Co-education; an introduction: Education is the process through which the necessary changes are introduced into behavior of the individual living in a society. It tells the individuals how to accommodate themselves according to ongoing pace and as a result society becomes prosperous. Co-education is the system of education in which both girls and boys are present in the same classes during learning. In this system there is found practical life interaction between two genders (Karpiak *et al.*, 2007).

The concept of specified colleges is already in vogue i.e. women colleges and men colleges. Then there is found a transition of both male and female institutions into mixed form of institutions which has already been observed. Since 1960 this transition is more evident and rapid in case of male colleges as compared to be allocated with the female gender. In addition to these there has also been found a third form of higher education which is almost emerged in nineteenth century called as coordinate education (Miller-Bernal and Poulson, 2006).

Pakistan is lacking behind in providing its people with proper education particularly in case of women's education (Hubbard and Datnow, 2005). Let alone facing discrimination at the higher education levels i.e. college and university women are even discriminated for getting initial levels of education. Majorly the education at primary levels is imparted in coeducation settings their parents feel fear for sending their girl children to school. Resultantly the female students are not sent to school in which a co-education system is followed (UNESCO, 2002). On the other hand, males are given preference even in the system where both are supposed to be

equal by the stakeholders, the preference may be given due to the 'religious factor' (Mehdi, 2007). It is also because of the reason that parents encourage male children on the expense of female children (Yasmin, 2007) and pay their attention and money upon them the needs of female children are addressed at secondary stage with the leftover resources. In short, girls face plethora of problems while going through co-education and thus, can't play their productive part in national economy. So, there is a dire need to explore the reasons of such problems and effects of those problems on the female students.

Mixed opinions about co-education: Female and male students when are taught in common environment may denote as co-education. It has many positive and negative effects upon the male and female students who are studying in that environment. As for positive effects, it changes behaviors of two genders and creates tolerance and respect for each other which is good for a peaceful society (Noureen and Awan, 2011). It also builds confidence in an individual and makes him/her an ideal person to live in a real world.

Proponents of co-education are of the view that such institutions provide a qualitatively superior learning environment for their students in which they are having more confidence (Tidball *et al.*, 1999; Riordan, 1994; Whitt, 1994 and Sharp, 1991). The stereotypical mentality of the students as well as teachers is abolished if they are present in co-education classes. However, at the secondary level of education this system of co-education should not be encouraged. The philosophy behind this argument is the differing responses of both boys and girls. Especially at these level boys learn to behave as boys. In that settings, there are high chances that there may be found repression of responses

and expressions of both genders. Hence, the separate institutions are better at college level for boys and girls (Fineran and Bolen, 2006).

In contrary, it is believed that studying of male and female in the same environment makes a person lack in self-confidence (Ballou and Podgursky, 2000). It is, generally, female students that get negative effect of the environment on their mind which is not supportive to their academic and social needs (Pascarella *et al.*, 1997; Drew & Work, 1998 and Rice, 1991). The same reason discourages the female students and they don't make themselves prominent at different educational institutions especially where males are dominant (Astin, 1993; Shah, 2003).

Thus, co-education has been under criticism due to various reasons and people totally dislike it (Bajwa, 1994) but whenever the situation originates where students are forced to get education in the institutions they are not satisfied with that because in that case they don't get the opportunity of sharing their ideas with their opposite gender (Smith, 1990) and this view is not related with the socio-economics of the female respondents (Andrews 1999).

Effects of traditions and culture: According to the traditions in Pakistan it is considered the major responsibility of parents and family members to develop an understanding among their children about two different genders. It is argued that learning of girls is affected by the presence of opposite gender in classroom as it distracts their attention, resultantly girls don't perform at maximum as far as their education is concerned. The norms, traditions and culture that serve the purpose of determining appropriate and inappropriate behavior of an individual while interaction with others (Durlauf and Blume, 2008) does not permit such type of education system in Pakistan. Therefore, due to this reason many parents do not allow their children for study in these institutions. According to a survey taken on April 2010, around 79% of the parents do not want their children (especially) to be sent to the co-educational institutions because it is culturally abandoned and disliked that male and female sit together and get education. If some people allow females to go for free interaction with males in an educational setting then it is considered that they are violating social norms, also may or may not be coupled with the religious restrictions. Yet, coeducation in which people often feel there may be the removal of veil (*Purdah*) of women has so far been not accepted by people having conservative thoughts and women are likely to be assigned with home based tasks and activities (Malik, 2006). The socio-economic factors behind sending kids to schools is apparently considered very prominent and this trend of parent is determined by the socio-economic characteristics as gender, income, age, culture and last but not the least education (Abdal *et al.*, 2013). Especially, if the parents are educated they are supposed to be broad minded and they make efforts to send their children for high quality education also at higher levels of education.

Gender inequality: Co-educational discriminations are also evident because of gender based inequalities in the country and its educational institutions. People don't send their daughters to school to save them from such behaviors. The education related discriminations are one of the leading barriers of women learning in the country (World Bank, 2001). The behavior is observed on the part of teachers and parents at the same time. Not only observe but the teachers are also found involve in changing students' behavior in a positive direction and this change in positive direction may be attributed as students' education (Firdous *et al.*, 2015). But it is seen that teachers give preference to the same gender or different gender students in multiple ways. Likewise, parents, who also have responsibility to improve their behavior and achievements through specific and equality based treatment with their children (Firdous *et al.*, 2015), discriminate education of their daughters at household levels. Contrarily, male members are encouraged for education in household and are given preferences over women (Maqsood *et al.*, 2012; UNESCO, 2010) and the tasks of female members of a family are only restricted to manage household activities and don't consider the option that the females can go out and get education in the situation where the unknown male students would also be present (Khalid and Mukhtar, 2002; Maqsood *et al.*, 2012). As the previously mentioned is the fate of female in coeducation then the question was popularly asked that why women actually go to such colleges around world? (Miller-Bernal & Poulson, 2006). The same reason is keeping participation of women very low into development of society and parents don't want their females to go for education with other males (Shaikat & Siddiquah, 2014; Halai *et al.*, 2007). The female members often face multiple discriminations while passing through coeducation system. They are snubbed and discouraged for nothing by the teachers and whenever there is chance of any professional skills they are least considered for it. Moreover, their students also treat them inhumanly; they discourage them by making fun of their spoken words, they notice their every movement with the sense of discrimination, hoot in public and harass them in multiple ways by their maintained higher status in the society. If the female members are given more security against multiple harassments, they will have confidence even in the presence of opposite genders. The society imposes some restrictions upon the females in which they are not free to interact with the member of other gender in this society. They are not allowed to go for freedom in their interaction even at schools, colleges and universities. Therefore, the females miss the opportunity to go for education and remain unfruitful for society.

Travelling difficulties: Moreover, they face difficulty in moving around for even the fulfillment of their basic needs. So, when they move such institutes they face problems in approaching these places. These problems emerge with more intensity in big cities where access to educational institutes is

more problematic. The female students who travel from rural and peri-urban areas to urban schools, colleges and universities with their pack luggage face misbehavior of helpers, drivers and other passengers. This problem is also threatening girls to enter the institutions which are present at a distant and in case good facilities are available there even then there are possibilities of sexual harassment and abuse (Sathar and Haque, 2000; World Bank, 1999; UNESCO, 2010). Minimum facility of common rooms is available at the universities which make them more frustrated.

Conclusion: Teaching boys and girls separate or in combine classes have been a point of debate for long. Proponents of this system of education argue that it should be in vogue as it creates confidence among the students and prepare them for real-world situation. Whereas opponents strongly believe that the system has its functional issues. Some of the discriminated students as females in Pakistan feel themselves snubbed in such systems. The same gender hegemony can destroy the learning objectives and especially females can feel them as a miserable part of society as they would be mistreated, discriminated and harassed in this setting. Moreover, the presence of opposite gender can also distract them from learning objectives and they may not be serious in pursuing these learning objectives. By keeping all the above intact it can be argued that co-education settings have its own merits and demerits. Co-education also provides many opportunities to females through its structure; only need is to maintain discipline in the setting. So, that focus of this type of system may be maintained upon learning only and this may not be a source of trouble for any male and female member of society.

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